

PUBLIC NOTICE
ARKANSAS RIVER NAVIGATION STUDY
CORPS SEEKS PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public Involvement: The US Army Corps of Engineers is seeking comments through May 24 on a Draft Feasibility Report and Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Arkansas River Navigation Study. As part of the public involvement process, the agency has also scheduled three public hearings for early May in Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Information: The study has been examining ways to make the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System more reliable and improve navigation efficiency. The study explored ways to reduce the average number of days each year that flows are high enough to impede navigation. It also addressed potential deepening of the waterway so barges can be loaded more fully, and it examined widening the Verdigris River portion of the system in Oklahoma.

The documents have identified cost-effective, environmentally sound methods to alter flow regimes from the Oklahoma lakes to reduce the number of days with high flows and to deepen the navigation channel to 12 feet, but widening the Verdigris River was not recommended.

The Corps estimates the recommended changes will cost \$160 million to implement, and will return an estimated \$22 million in benefits each year. An estimated \$12 million in environmental mitigation is included in the cost estimate, and the Corps is still working with the environmental resource agencies to develop a final mitigation plan.

Public hearings will be held May 3 through 5, and all interested persons are invited to attend. Each hearing will follow the same format. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. for registration, formal presentations by the Corps will begin at 6:30 p.m., and public comments will be sought afterward.

The first hearing will be held May 3 at the Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce at 200 East Markham Ave. in Little Rock, Ark. The second hearing will be held May 4 in the Latture Conference Center at the University of Arkansas' Fort Smith campus at Grand Ave. and 50th Street in Fort Smith, Ark. The final hearing will be held May 5 at the Henry Zarrow Regional Library at 2224 W. 51st St. in Tulsa, Okla.

The Draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement can be viewed on the Internet at <http://www.swl.usace.army.mil/projmgmt/arkriverstudy.html>. The Internet site also contains a list of libraries and other locations in Arkansas and Oklahoma where paper copies of the documents can be viewed. Free electronic copies are available on a compact disc by writing, calling, or emailing the Corps. Paper copies are available for purchase at cost including printing and shipping.

Point of Contact: Public comments, questions, or requests for a copy of the documents should be provided to Ron Carman (ATTN: CESWL-PR-P), Little Rock Engineer District, P.O. Box 867, Little Rock, AR 72203-0867. For phone requests or information in Arkansas, call Carman or Renee Wright at 501-324-5601 or 501-324-6139. In Oklahoma, call Ed Rossman at 918-669-4921. Comments, questions or requests can also be e-mailed to AR-OK.River.Study@usace.army.mil. Comments must be received by May 24 to become part of the official record.